



# ISSUES AND PROBLEMS OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION IN SENAPATI AND CHANDEL DISTRICTS OF MANIPUR

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## ABSTRACT

The present paper made an attempt to find out the various issues and problems prevailing in the elementary education in Senapati and Chandel hill districts of Manipur. Necessary information was collected through questionnaires from a total of 90 headmasters comprising of 60 in Senapati district and 30 headmasters in Chandel district. Data was also collected from School Inspectors and members of School Management and Development Committee through interview scheduled. The findings revealed that insufficient physical infrastructure, shortage of trained teachers, inadequate teaching materials, lack of proper and systematic administration, insufficient funds, lack of community participation, etc., were the main issues and problems hindering the achievement in quality improvement of elementary education. In view of the findings, some measures have been suggested for the improvement of elementary education by pointing out ways and means to tackle the issues and problems prevailing in the study areas.

**KEYWORDS:** Elementary Education, Issues, Problems, Senapati, Chandel.

## INTRODUCTION

Universalisation of elementary education has been one of the top priorities of India since independence. The government has put a tremendous effort for the improvement of elementary education in the country through the introduction of various schemes and policy reforms such as Operation Black Board (OBB) of National Policy of Education (NPE) 1986, Mid-Day Meal (MDM), Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), etc. Despite all these efforts, the target of Article 45 of the Indian Constitution for providing free and compulsory education to all children up to elementary stage still remains a distant dream in many cases. The quality improvement of elementary education has not been commensurate with the enormity of problems and weaknesses.

In Manipur, the seed of elementary education was sown in the year 1872, although it could not grow and expand rapidly at the beginning as the local people showed negative attitude towards Western (English) education (Devi, 2006). However, the introduction of free and compulsory elementary education gave a strong impetus towards the progress of elementary education in Manipur. The SSA scheme was launched in the state of Manipur in 2005. It aims at providing useful and relevant elementary education for all children in the age group 6-14 years (NIC, 2016). However, due to various reasons and constraints, it could not achieve in the target period (Sharma, 2013). Besides, with the provision of the Right to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act 2009, the state government has been putting all efforts for achieving the target of universalisation of elementary education. However, even at the end of the 11th Five Year Plan, the Education Department has not been able to achieve the target of 100% enrolment of children in the state due to existence of drop-out of schools children (Planning Department, 2012). Elementary education in Manipur suffers from certain drawbacks especially in the hill districts. It has been observed that there is regional imbalance in terms of development between the hills and the valley. Inadequate physical facilities, poor communication, shortage of trained teachers, poverty and ignorance of the people in the hill areas are the main obstacles in the progress of elementary education in Manipur (Devi, 2006).

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To find out the various issues and problems of elementary education in Senapati and Chandel districts of Manipur.
2. To suggest measures for the improvement of elementary education in the two districts under study.

## METHODOLOGY

The present study was conducted in Senapati and Chandel hill districts of Manipur by adopting a descriptive research method. Research tools such as questionnaire and interview scheduled were developed and employed by the investigator for the purpose of data collection. Simple random sampling technique was followed for selecting the desired number of sample from the two districts under study. Information regarding issues and problems of elementary education was collected through questionnaire from a total of 90 headmasters comprising of 60 in Senapati district and 30 in Chandel district. Besides, data was also gathered from School Inspectors and members of School Management and Development Committees (SMDCs) through interview scheduled.

## FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

### 1. Physical Infrastructure

The study revealed that 73.33% of the headmasters in Senapati and Chandel districts were not satisfied with the condition of their school buildings. There was shortage of furniture in majority of the schools along with pathetic classroom partitions leading to difficulties in the teaching learning process. Unfortunately, only 27.78% elementary schools provided toilet facility, 51.11% elementary schools provided safe drinking water and 26.67% elementary schools provided electricity connection in their classrooms. There were only 12.22% elementary schools with library facility. Under such circumstances, the quality of elementary education is adversely affected.

### Suggestions

- a) The concerned authority should provide attractive school buildings, sufficient rooms for each class along with proper classroom partitions and adequate infrastructure. Facilities like safe drinking water, separate toilet for boys and girls, and library should be provided to every elementary schools.
- b) Phase-wise developmental programme must be arranged for the improvement of elementary schools.

### 2. Recruitment of Elementary School Teachers

Teachers play an important role in providing quality education and therefore, well qualified and trained teachers should be recruited without the least influence of any section of the society. Unfortunately, the present policy of recruitment of school teachers in the two districts is not in tune with the objective of achieving quality education. The study revealed that majority of the respondents was not satisfied with the recruitment process of teachers due to the interference of politicians and bureaucrats.

### Suggestion

- a) There is an urgent need to modify the existing system of teachers' recruitment. Certificate of Elementary Teacher Education/ Diploma in Elementary Education should be the requisite qualification for all the elementary school teachers.

### 3. Untrained Teachers

**Table 1: Showing the number of trained and untrained teachers**

Sex	Trained		Untrained	
	N	%	N	%
Male	154	20.00	224	29.10
Female	134	17.40	258	33.50
Total	288	37.40	482	62.60

Table 1 shows the percentage of trained and untrained teachers as reported by the headmasters in Senapati and Chandel districts. Majority (62.60%) of the teachers in the two districts were untrained whereas 37.40% teachers were trained. Of the 37.40% trained teachers 20.00% belong to males and 17.40% belong to females. The presence of such a huge backlog of untrained teachers hampered the qualitative improvement of elementary education. Therefore, the situation deserves our immediate concern and attention.

*Suggestion*

- a) In-service training programme such as short term training, refresher course, workshops, etc., must be made compulsory for all teachers.

**4. Academic**

The nature of curriculum at elementary school in the two districts under study was found to be satisfactory as 85.56% headmasters responded in the affirmative. However, 14.44% headmasters responded that the curriculum was not satisfactory stating that; it did not cater to the needs and interests of the students. Majority of the schools were found to provide necessary teaching aids, although the types of teaching aids provided were insufficient and the conditions were very unsatisfactory.

**Table 2: Showing the academic problems**

Problems relating to	Respondents in %	
	Yes	No
Examination	34.44	65.56
Progress report	45.56	54.44
Co-curricular activities	28.89	71.11

Table 2 depicts the various academic problems faced by the headmasters in the two districts under study. Regarding examination, 34.44% headmasters faced problem due to insufficient invigilators, inexperience invigilators, and use of unfair means by the students. Besides, 45.56% of the headmasters were confronted with the problem of maintaining progress report card due to time constraint and negligence by the concerned teachers to complete on time. Further, 28.89% headmasters faced problems in conducting co-curricular activities due to insufficient games and sports materials and paucity of space.

*Suggestions*

- a) Sufficient teaching aids must be provided and, all teachers must commit themselves fully for the successful academic programme of the school.
- b) A large hall to conduct quiz, debates, career guidance programme etc should be provided. Sufficient games and sports materials and playground should be provided to every elementary school.

**5. Administration**

The present study observed that majority of the headmasters in Senapati and Chandel districts were responsible in planning and decision making. 94.44% of them maintained good and cordial relationship with the teachers. The remaining 5.56% headmasters reported that some teachers were irregular and neglected their assigned duties which in turn perturb their relationship. All the elementary schools were found to conduct staff meetings, although 62.22% schools did not maintain any specific timing. The study also observed that school records were maintained by majority of the schools. However, only 27.78% of the schools maintained salary record while 44.44% schools maintained record of co-curricular activities and 43.33% schools maintained record of parent-teacher meetings.

**Table 3: Showing the distribution of MDM**

Frequency of distribution of MDM	No. of schools	%
Daily	7	7.78
2 to 3 times a week	20	22.22
Weekly	26	28.89
When items are available	17	18.89
Total	70	77.78
Not provided	20	22.22

As seen in Table 3, MDM was distributed in 77.78% of the elementary schools. But it was not provided in the remaining 22.22% schools. Of the 77.78% schools providing MDM, only 7.78% of them distributed every day. Therefore, the nature of distribution of MDM in the two districts under study was not in accord with the SSA guidelines, although majority of the schools were found providing it.

The study also revealed that 48.89% headmasters faced problems in school administration due to over-burden of office work in the absence of office clerks, lack of competent teachers and lack of co-operation from the parents.

*Suggestions*

- a) Staff meeting must be conducted at least once in a month, and all records should be maintained properly for better administration of the schools.
- b) MDM must be distributed as per the norms of SSA, and sufficient office staff must be appointed in every school. Besides, parents/community must render full co-operation to the teachers and school authorities for the successful administration of the schools.

**6. Financial**

The main sources of financial income at elementary schools in the two districts under study were the state government and the central government. 63.33% of the respondents commented that the budget of elementary schools was prepared by the Managing Committee. However, in 36.67% schools, it was prepared by headmasters and senior teachers, District Education Authority, secretary of school and office clerk. With respect to the school accounts, 93.33% of the respondents stated that their school's account was audited while the remaining 6.67% stated that their school's account was not audited.

The main financial problems of elementary schools in the two districts as reported by the headmasters were insufficient funds from the government to purchase teaching equipments, sports materials, infrastructure, etc.; and irregular payment of school fees by parents in private schools. Besides, delays in receiving funds from the government and irregular payment of teachers' salary were the other financial problems prevalent in these areas.

*Suggestions*

- a) The government should release the financial grants on time and make sure that the same is not misused at any costs.
- b) School accounts must be audited at regular intervals for proper financial management.
- c) Parents in private schools must pay their ward's fees regularly.
- d) Irregular payment of teachers' salary must be checked.

**7. Community Participation**

Involvement of community or parents has emerged as an effective strategy in improving elementary education at the local level. The inseparable link between education and community has been understood and emphasized by different educationists, commissions and committees.

**Table 4: Showing the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA)**

PTA	No. of schools	%
Yes	36	40.00
No	54	60.00

Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) is of great concerned in the present study as 60.00% of the elementary schools did not have PTA (Table 4). PTA was formed in 40.00% schools to advice the school administration, to point out weaknesses and, to suggest measures for the over-all development. However, most of the PTA members were not aware of the goals of PTA and their responsibilities as PTA members. There must be a reason towards the sub-standard community participation in the educational process. Lack of information on the availability of resources from the community as a contributing factor and, lack of commitment and compulsion to education values etc, might be the contributing factors towards the failure of community/parent's participation in educational activities.

*Suggestions*

- a) Mobilisation of the community through public awareness campaign, workshops, etc., and ensuring community participation in the educational development process.
- b) Readiness on the part of the administration and policy makers to accept the vital importance of the community involvement in the educational system.
- c) All-round positive attitudes and commitment of parents/guardians towards education must be ensured.

**8. Favouritism of Private Schools over Government Schools**

Enrolment of students was higher and continues to increase at the private management schools rather than the government schools. The main reason behind this was the deteriorating quality and poor functioning of educational system prevailing at the government elementary schools.

*Suggestions*

- a) There is an urgent need to modify and improve the quality of government schools so as to compete with those of private schools.
- b) The attitude of parents/guardians towards government schools must be changed by inculcating a feeling of possibility of quality education with a lesser burden of educational expenditure.

**9. Monitoring and Evaluation System**

Majority of the school inspectors reported that there was no specific timing for conducting school inspections in the two districts under study. It suggested that there was no proper and regular inspection of elementary schools by the concerned authority. Most of the school inspectors expressed dissatisfaction over their inability to carry out their duties effectively as they were sometimes, helpless to take any action when politicians and bureaucrats involved in the process.

So inspections were done merely for the fulfilment of their duties, and even if at all, there was proper inspection, the higher authority concerned did not protect the report submitted by the school inspectors for taking up remedial measures in the interest of the schools.

All the school inspectors in the two districts under study reported that they faced problems while conducting school inspections especially in the interior part of the villages due poor transportation and communication, non-sanctioning of TA/DA and non-availability of vehicles from the state government. Thus, the system of monitoring and evaluation in the two districts was not satisfactory. The absence of training programme for the inspecting staff when new changes were made in the system of education was another factor for the drawback of monitoring system.

#### *Suggestions*

- a) The concerned authority should inspect each school at regular intervals. Type-wise inspection could be arranged such as physical infrastructure, academic, administration, etc., for the sake of its convenience.
- b) The state government must provide vehicle to carry out the activities of school inspections and all the education officials must performed their duties with sincerity and self commitment.
- c) Reports of the inspecting team must be protected in the interest of the schools and follow-up actions must be taken immediately by the concerned authority.
- d) Training programme for the inspecting staff must be arranged and made compulsory.

#### **10. School Management and Development Committee (SMDC)**

The study revealed that 62.22% of the SMDC members were neither aware of how the government sanctioned the various grants to their schools, nor, how these grants were being utilized. It was a clear indication that many of the SMDC members were elected only to fulfil the requirement prescribed in the RTE, Act 2009. 45.00% of the SMDC members opined that the financial grants received were misused and expressed dissatisfaction with their respective schools due to shortage of facilities and lack of co-operation etc. Therefore, it was found that most of the SMDC's in the study areas were not properly functioning due to lack of awareness about their rights and responsibilities, and lack of self commitment among members leading to negligence of their assigned duties.

#### *Suggestions*

- a) Awareness programme should be arranged for the SMDC members to realise the goals of SMDC, their roles and responsibilities as members in the educational system
- b) To ensure full participation of all the SMDC members and inculcating positive attitude towards education.

#### **CONCLUSION**

The present study has highlighted the various issues and problems of elementary education in Senapati and Chandel hill districts of Manipur. Lack of physical infrastructures, inadequate number of trained teachers, academic related problems, lack of proper and effective administration, lack of community involvement, shortage of funds, etc. all together post hurdles for the smooth functioning and quality improvement of elementary education. The study also suggested various measures to improve the quality of elementary education. Systematic mobilisation of the community and co-operation of all the stake holders are the essential pre-requisites for the universal achievement and substantial quality improvement of elementary education. Therefore, there is an urgent need for the central and state government, local governing bodies, teachers, parents/community, NGOs, and scholars to come forward together and solve the various issues and problems without further delay.

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